

HONORING THE LIFE OF SERGEANT MAJOR RAY V. WILBURN (RET.)

HON. PAUL COOK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Mr. COOK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of retired United States Marine Corps Sergeant Major Ray V. Wilburn, who passed away on January 2, 2018 at the age of 98. Born in Wolf City, Texas in 1919, Sgt. Maj. Wilburn hitchhiked 75 miles to enlist in the Marine Corps in 1939. Following the outbreak of World War II, he was assigned to 3rd Artillery Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment in the Solomon Islands. His unit eventually saw combat on the islands of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Tulagi.

At the beginning of the Korean War, Sgt. Maj. Wilburn was an artillery instructor at Camp Del Mar, California, but in 1951 he received orders to serve with the 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment in Korea. His unit was assigned to Artillery Valley where they endured constant barrages of enemy fire from 122mm rounds.

In 1967, Sgt. Maj. Wilburn was sent to Vietnam with the 1st Medical Battalion where he was lauded by his superiors for his leadership and mettle. Nightly Viet Cong mortar attacks forced he and his fellow Marines to perform their duties in flak vests and helmets.

The Marine Corps granted Sgt. Maj. Wilburn's request to serve more than 30 years, however in 1971 he was forced to medically retire after 31 years of service. If given the opportunity, I have no doubt that Sgt. Maj. Wilburn would have served his beloved Marine Corps another 31 years. I would like to pass along my condolences to his family and friends, and I thank God everyday for men like Sgt. Maj. Wilburn. Semper Fi.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to cast my vote for roll call vote 18 on January 16, 2018. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on Roll Call No. 18.

AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT AND MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE ACT MODERNIZATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3445, African Growth and Opportunity Act and Millennium Challenge Act ("AGOA and MCA Modernization Act"), because it provides assistance to certain sub-Saharan African countries to improve their economies and foster trade with the U.S.

I have long supported trade ties between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa, as I believe this trade relationship would be mutually advantageous for both parties involved.

In 2016, 39 of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa were designated as AGOA-eligible, according to the House Foreign Affairs Committee's report on the bill.

Top imports to the U.S. under AGOA include energy products, transportation equipment, and textiles, according to the International Trade Administration.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is a foreign aid agency that provides grants to lower-income countries for specific projects to promote economic growth.

It invests in countries through compacts—which have ranged from \$66 million in Cape Verde to almost \$700 million in Morocco and Tanzania—as well as smaller "threshold agreements" that help countries become eligible for a compact, according to the committee report.

It has distributed \$10.8 billion through compacts and \$583.6 million through threshold agreements.

With Africa's consumer spending expected to reach one trillion dollars, now is the time to accelerate this important trade relationship.

The AGOA program and the MCC would have new responsibilities and reporting requirements under an amended version of H.R. 3445.

Under H.R. 3445, the president would have to establish a website for AGOA that includes information about technical assistance provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development's regional trade hubs and links to U.S. embassies in AGOA countries.

After each U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum, H.R. 3445 would require the president to publish the outcomes and an assessment of progress made by members and the private sector toward meeting previous commitments.

Under H.R. 3445, the State Department would have to direct U.S. embassies in sub-Saharan Africa to promote AGOA and link to the AGOA website on their websites.

The president would be directed to:

Develop policies and encourage the provision of technical assistance to facilitate trade cooperation among AGOA countries;

Train businesses and government officials on how to access AGOA benefits; and

Provide capacity building for African entrepreneurs and trade associations.

H.R. 3445 would set new requirements for AGOA's website and outreach work.

H.R. 3445 would modify country eligibility criteria for MCC compacts and allow countries to enter into concurrent compacts.

According to a committee summary, H.R. 3445 would redefine and stabilize movement between the low income and lower middle income candidate country pools, consistent with authorizing language that has been carried in annual appropriations bills since FY 2012.

According to the committee report, countries would be eligible for assistance if their per capita income does not exceed the lower middle income country threshold established by the World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which is \$4,035.

Countries would be eligible for low income assistance if their per capita income is among the 75 lowest countries.

Otherwise, they would still be eligible for lower middle income assistance.

The formula under current law is not based on an income ranking.

If changes in a country's income caused it to move between categories, its assistance level would change after two subsequent fiscal years.

H.R. 3445 would also require countries to demonstrate a commitment to supporting civil society to be eligible for participation.

Before being selected for participation, the MCC would have to report to its governing board on the country's treatment of civil society and any laws it has that regulate the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and internet use.

The reports would be required before the board approved compacts for the next seven years.

A country's improvement on criteria that were relevant to its initial compact would be considered when determining eligibility for a subsequent, non-concurrent compact.

We should support the efforts of the AGOA program as it provides assistance to sub-Saharan African countries, improves these countries' economies, and helps to facilitate trade between these countries and the U.S.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3445.

HONORING THE LIFE OF WORLD WAR II VETERAN JOSEPH A. BRUNO

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Joseph A. Bruno, a World War II Veteran who passed away on December 20, 2017.

Originally from Willsboro, New York, Joe enlisted in the United States Army in the Fall of 1942, where he served his country as a member of the Signal Corps. After completing signals training at Plattsburgh State Teachers College in June of 1942 and receiving follow-on training, Joe deployed to England with his unit. On July 22, 1944, Joe's unit landed in France, where he worked to establish a trans-Atlantic communications capability. Later, during the Battle of the Bulge, Joe and his unit were rushed to the front lines to hold the line against a German advance. Following the German surrender in 1945, Joe was slated to be shipped to the Pacific theater. His unit received word of Japan's surrender while at sea, and his ship was diverted to Boston.

In October of 1945, Joe was discharged from the Army at the rank of Technician Fifth Grade and returned to his hometown in Willsboro, where he worked with the railroad until his retirement in 1979.

On behalf of New York's 21st District, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to Joe's family and friends. Joe was an exemplary member of the community and his service to his country will not be forgotten.